

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: COMMENT BY "U.S. OFFICIAL" RE LEBANON

1. WE HAVE NO REPEAT NO TEXT OF WHAT WAS ALLEGEDLY SAID
BY A "U.S. OFFICIAL" RE LEBANON MAY 27 IN CONJUNCTION
SECRETARY'S ARRIVAL PARIS.

2. REUTERS CARRIED FOLLOWING BY RALPH HARRIS QUOTE
CONCERN OVER THE SITUATION IN LEBANON WAS VOICED BY
THE OFFICIAL AS SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER ARRIVED
HERE TO ATTEND ECONOMIC AND ENERGY CONFERENCE AND TO
PREPARE FOR PRESIDENT FORD'S EUROPEAN TOUR STARTING
ON WEDNESDAY. THE OFFICIAL SAID CONDITIONS IN LEBANON
WERE BEGINNING TO RESEMBLE THOSE IN JORDAN IN 1970, WHEN
KING HUSSEIN'S ARMY PUT DOWN A MILITARY CHALLENGE FOR
PALESTINE GUERRILLAS WITH GREAT LOSS OF LIFE. SYRIA
THEN SENT TANKS RACING TOWARDS ITS BORDER WITH
JORDAN TO SUPPORT THE GUERRILLAS BUT PULLED THEM
BACK AT THE LAST MOMENT WHEN ISRAEL, BACKED BY
THE UNITED STATES, PREPARED TO REACT WITH FORCE.
SOME SOURCES THOUGHT LEBANON WAS FACING ITS MOST
SERIOUS CRISIS SINCE 1958 WHEN PRESIDENT EISENHOWER
SENT U.S. MARINES THERE TO HELP THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
MEET WHAT WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A COMMUNIST THREAT.
THE SENIOR AMERICAN OFFICIAL SAID THE SITUATION IN
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LEBANON DID NOT LOOK AS THOUGH IT WAS GETTING OUT

OF CONTROL AT THE MOMENT. BUT HE DREW A PARALLEL WITH THE WAY EUROPE SLID INTO THE FIRST WORLD WAR WITHOUT ANYONE REALLY KNOWING WHAT WAS HAPPENING. A SITUATION HAD TO BE AVOIDED IN WHICH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WOULD LOSE CONTROL, ISRAEL MOVED IN TO PROTECT HIMSELF AGAINST THE GUERRILLAS AND SYRIA WENT TO THE AID OF LEBANON. ALL IT WOULD TAKE TO START A NEW CONFLICT WAS FOR SYRIA TO SEND A SINGLE BRIGADE INTO LEBANON, THE OFFICIAL SAID. END QUOTE. SIMILAR ARTICLES CARRIED BY AFP AND AMERICAN SERVICES. THANKS TO CURRENT LEBANESE CRISIS FOREGOING DID NOT RECEIVE MUCH PLAY IN LEBANESE PRESS.

3. HOWEVER, ACTING MIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS LICIEH DAHDAH TELEPHONED ME THIS MORNING TO INQUIRE PRECISELY WHAT "SECRETARY KISSINGER SAID" UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN PARIS ABOUT LEBANON. I POINTED OUT PRESS STORIES REFERRED TO A "U.S. OFFICIAL" AND DAHDAH MERELY LAUGHED, SAYING EVERYONE ASSUMED IT WAS THE SECRETARY. DAHDAH DESCRIBED STATEMENT AS "MOST UNFORTUNATE" AND "PERPLEXING". HE ASKED RE BACKGROUND OF STATEMENT. TOLD HIM I WOULD INQUIRE.

4. SUNNI LEADER SAEB SALAAM ALSO INQUIRED SOMEWHAT AGITATEDLY ABOUT ACTUAL TEXT OF WHAT WAS SAID, FOR PERSONS "AROUND HIM" ARE INTERPRETING STATEMENT TO BE THREAT OF U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE LEBANON IF SYRIA WERE TO INTERVENE.

5. WE WERE, OF COURSE, SOMEWHAT CONCERNED BY FOREGOING ARTICLE BECAUSE OF ITS USE OF EXAMPLES IN WHICH IN ONE CASE THERE WAS DIRECT INTERVENTION BY US (1958) AND IN THE OTHER US AS INDIRECTLY INVOLVED BY BACKING ISRAEL'S PREPARATIONS FOR INTERVENTION. MOREOVER, AS WE HAVE TRIED TO POINT OUT REPEATEDLY, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SIMILARITY IN SENSE OF FEDAYEEN/LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFLICTING SITUATION IN LEBANON IS DIFFERENT IN MANY IMPORTANT RESPECTS THAN THAT WHICH EXISTED IN JORDAN IN 1970. WE ALSO NOTE IMPLICATION THAT SYRIAN UP TO MISCHIEF IN THE LEBANON. FOR THOSE FOLLOWING LEBANESE
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MATTERS CLOSELY, IT IS APPARENT THAT THIS IS NOT REPEAT NOT THE CASE AND THAT SYRIAN ACTIONS HERE, I.E. KHADDAM'S VISIT, ETC., WERE HELPFUL IN COOLING SITUATION.

6. FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA SENT HIS CLOSEST ASSOCIATE AROUND TO SEE ME THIS MORNING ON OTHER MATTERS. TAQLA INTERPRETS STATEMENT AS EFFORT TO BE HELPFUL.

7. PERSONALLY I AM NOT REPEAT NOT TOO MUCH CONCERNED
RE LUCIEN DAHDAH'S INQUIRY, FOR HE WILL PROBABLY BE
OUT OF OFFICE IN NEXT 47-72 HOURS. HE IS, HOWEVER,
CLOSE TO PRESIDENT FRANGIE AND I ASSUME INQUIRY WAS
INITIATED BY PRESIDENT. SAEB SALAAM'S INTEREST, ON
THE OTHER HAND, IS MORE IMPORTANT, FOR HE IS CLOSELY
ALLIED WITH PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE KARAME AND IS
EXTREMELY CONCERNED. THEREFORE REQUEST ASAP INDICATION
OF WHAT ACTUALLY WAS SAID, WHAT WAS RATIONALIZATION
BEHIND STATEMENT AND WHAT WE SHOULD TELL THE LEBANESE.
GODLEY

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